



International
Labour
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Independent Final Evaluation: Enhanced capacity of workers' organizations and employer and business membership organizations to promote and implement social and environmental policies and practices

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Eswatini, Honduras, Mongolia, Morocco, Nigeria, Philippines, Tanzania, Viet Nam, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, India, Kazakhstan, Oman, Panama

Evaluation date: 15 May 2026

Evaluation type: RBSA

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office

Technical Office: ACT/EMP, ACTRAV

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Donor(s) & budget: RBSA, 2 Million US dollars

Key Words: Decent work, Youth Participation, ESG, Just Transition

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure	The project “Enhanced capacity of workers’ organizations and employer and business membership organizations to promote and implement social and environmental policies and practices” is a global, 22-month initiative, implemented jointly by the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau of Workers’ Activities (ACTRAV). Operating in up to 16 countries across all regions, the project aims to strengthen the institutional, technical, and representational capacities of Employers’ and Business Membership Organizations (EBMOs), and of workers’ organizations, contributing directly to Programme and Budget (P&B) Outputs 2.1 and 2.2.
Present situation of the project	The project was implemented from March 2024 to May 2026.
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	The evaluation was conducted to examine the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and potential impact of the ACT/EMP and ACTRAV components and to provide recommendations for future similar projects. This evaluation also identified as lessons learned and good practices. The primary clients of the evaluation will be the ILO, in particular ACT/EMP, ACTRAV, and PROGRAM, as well as the participating employers’ and workers organisations.
Methodology of evaluation	The evaluator addressed the evaluation questions defined in the terms of reference, including the integration of the ILO cross-cutting issues (gender equality and non-discrimination, international labour standards and social dialogue). The evaluation used several sources of evidence, combining primary qualitative data with secondary quantitative data. Qualitative data were obtained from key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Quantitative data were obtained from data presented by the ILO in different reports, as well as from other secondary sources. Data collection methods and stakeholder perspectives were triangulated to bolster the credibility and validity of the results.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

The project was highly relevant to the emerging needs of employers’ and workers’ organizations in relation to ESG, climate transition, youth inclusion and evolving labour market dynamics. It effectively addressed institutional capacity gaps, particularly in supporting EBMOs to operationalise ESG and responsible business conduct, and workers’ organizations to strengthen youth participation and engagement in just transition processes. The intervention was well aligned with the ILO Programme and Budget 2024–25, relevant Country Programme Outcomes, and broader national priorities on sustainable development and climate action. While gender equality and non-discrimination were acknowledged, they were not systematically integrated across implementation. Overall, the project was strategically positioned within the ILO’s mandate on normative support and constituent capacity building.

Coherence

Internal coherence within each component was strong, with ACT/EMP and ACTRAV interventions well aligned to their respective mandates and complementary to broader ILO initiatives on ESG, responsible business conduct, climate action and youth inclusion. However, coherence between both components was limited, as implementation largely followed parallel tracks with minimal structured collaboration, no joint results framework and only one shared country of intervention. Despite this, the project maintained strong alignment with DWCPs, CPOs and broader SDG priorities.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness varied across components and countries, with stronger results where institutional capacity and leadership commitment were stronger. Under the ACT/EMP component, the main achievements were the development and initial institutionalisation of ESG-related services by EBMOs, although broader policy influence and scaling remained limited in several contexts. Under ACTRAV, stronger results were achieved in just transition and NDC engagement, including improved policy participation and integration of just transition issues into policy and bargaining processes. The youth strand produced some concrete institutional gains, but sustained integration of youth into collective bargaining and decision-making structures remained uneven. Overall, the project generated meaningful institutional and capacity-building results, though structural change and policy influence varied considerably across countries.

Efficiency

Both components demonstrated reasonable efficiency in translating limited RBSA resources into visible results, largely by leveraging existing ACT/EMP and ACTRAV structures, partnerships and complementary ILO initiatives. Efficiency was enhanced through the use of ITC-ILO training platforms, peer exchanges, trade union networks and alignment with broader policy processes such as COP and NDC cycles. However, the limited funding and short implementation timeframe constrained sustained follow-up, monitoring and consolidation of longer-term outcomes. As a result, efficiency was strongest at the output level rather than in supporting deeper institutional change.

Sustainability and Impact

Sustainability was implicitly pursued through institutional capacity strengthening, with the expectation that reinforced governance structures, service models and policy engagement capacities would endure beyond the RBSA cycle.

Under ACT/EMP, sustainability prospects are strongest where ESG services were embedded in EBMO governance structures, linked to cost-recovery mechanisms and integrated into regular training calendars. In contexts where implementation remained at pilot or early rollout stages, sustainability is less certain if no continued technical accompaniment is secured.

Under ACTRAV, sustainability is strongest where youth representation was formalised within constitutional or governance structures and where engagement in climate governance was linked to institutionalised national policy processes. In countries where outcomes remained concentrated at the level of workshops or preliminary advocacy, durability is more uncertain. Continued relevance of NDC cycles and climate policy processes provides an external incentive for sustained engagement, but momentum may weaken without follow-up support.

Overall, sustainability prospects are positive where institutional anchoring occurred and weaker where outcomes remained event-based or preparatory. Targeted follow-up support, particularly in relation to youth integration into bargaining processes and structured engagement in NDC implementation, would strengthen long-term impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Recommendations

ACT/EMP component

1. Consolidate and deepen ESG service delivery in countries where services are already established. ACTEMP should prioritise follow-up support in countries where ESG services have

already been developed, focusing on institutionalisation, service quality and repeat delivery.

2. Strengthen the policy and advocacy dimension linked to ESG services. ACTEMP should support EBMOs to translate ESG service delivery experience into evidence-based policy engagement with governments, financial institutions and other ESG actors.

ACTRAV Component

3. Consolidate youth institutional reforms into bargaining practice. ACTRAV should prioritise follow-up support in countries where youth representation has been formalised within union governance structures, focusing on translating these reforms into active participation in collective bargaining processes.

4. Strengthen follow-up support for NDC implementation and monitoring. ACTRAV should build on initial union engagement in Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) consultations by supporting workers' organizations to participate more actively in implementation and monitoring processes. Technical support related to climate finance, sectoral transition frameworks and social dialogue mechanisms would help unions maintain influence as climate policies move from consultation to implementation. Regional exchanges among unions could further support knowledge sharing and collective learning.

5. Strengthen operational complementarities with other ILO initiatives. ACTRAV should more systematically map and articulate complementarities with other ILO initiatives at country level, particularly those related to green jobs, supply chains, labour governance and skills development. Improved coordination with country offices and regional structures would help embed union engagement within broader ILO programming and enhance sustainability.

ACT/EMP–ACTRAV

6. Strengthen ACT/EMP–ACTRAV joint programming at design stage. Future initiatives should promote stronger joint programming between ACTEMP and ACTRAV from the inception stage, with clearer definition of complementary roles, shared objectives and collaboration modalities. PROGRAM and regional offices could support this process by helping ensure that joint initiatives include clear governance arrangements and coordination structures.

7. Systematise light-touch cross-country peer learning mechanisms. ACTEMP and ACTRAV should formalise light, cost-effective peer-learning mechanisms to sustain and scale cross-country learning on ESG, youth and just transition.

8. Align ambition and resources. Future initiatives should match the ambition of expected outcomes with available resources, ensure clear prioritisation across intervention levels, and provide adequate project management and monitoring capacity to support effective implementation and learning.

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lessons Learned

1. Institutional anchoring is more sustainable than event-based capacity building. Results were most durable where reforms, particularly youth participation, were embedded in formal governance structures rather than limited to workshops or awareness-raising. Structural embedding through statutes or formal mandates significantly strengthens sustainability.

2. Differentiated institutional readiness strongly shapes results. Country-level results varied according to existing institutional capacity, leadership commitment and openness of policy environments. Tailored approaches are more effective than uniform expectations across diverse

contexts.

3. Realising synergies between parallel components requires explicit design features. The project was implemented through distinct ACT/EMP and ACTRAV components, with clear potential for synergies around shared thematic areas. However, in the absence of explicit design provisions, such collaboration tends to remain informal. This highlights the importance of incorporating simple enabling features from the design stage on, to facilitate more structured interaction between the components, where relevant.

Emerging Good Practices

1. Formalizing youth representation through governance reform. Embedding youth participation in formal union governance structures proved effective in ensuring continuity and strengthening ownership beyond the project period.

2. Using policy windows (COP and NDC Cycles) as catalytic entry points. Aligning activities with climate policy cycles enhanced the project's relevance, visibility, and structured engagement in just transition processes.

3. Integrating the youth- and just Transition agendas. Linking youth empowerment with climate and labour transition discussions strengthened leadership development and intergenerational dialogue within unions.

4. Leveraging regional and inter-regional peer learning. Peer exchanges accelerated learning, reduced duplication, and reinforced shared narratives on social dialogue and just transition across countries.

5. Institutionalisation of ESG services within EBMOs. Embedding ESG/RBC services into core EBMO structures ensures ownership and continuity beyond project timelines. Such institutionalisation strengthens sustainability and enables scaling of services as part of the EBMO's regular mandate.

6. Development of financially sustainable, service based ESG offers. Designing ESG interventions as revenue-generating service packages (training, advisory, tools) reduces the dependency on donor funding and enhances financial sustainability. This approach positions EBMOs as viable service providers and supports long-term continuation and expansion of services.

7. Integration of diagnostic tools to link training with enterprise-level change. Embedding diagnostic tools within training programmes allows EBMOs to move from awareness-raising to concrete enterprise-level improvements. It also generates structured data that can inform tailored advisory services and broader policy dialogue.

8. Combining service delivery with evidence-based policy engagement. Linking service delivery with analytical work and policy engagement strengthens the credibility and influence of EBMOs in national dialogue. This dual approach enables organisations to act as service providers and informed policy actors.